

CALIFORNIA Proposition 20



THE COASTAL INITIATIVE

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NOVEMBER 7 MARKS THE COASTAL COMMISSION'S 40th ANNIVERSARY

San Francisco, CA – The California Coastal Commission turns 40 this month, a historic milestone for the state's landmark coastal protection and planning agency. On November 7, 1972, California voters passed Proposition 20, the California Coastal Zone Conservation Act, which created and funded the Coastal Commission to plan for and regulate new development and strong policies to protect public access to and along the shoreline.

The passage of Proposition 20 was a remarkable accomplishment for the Coastal Alliance, the grassroots campaign organization made up of more than 700 environmental, civic and labor organizations. Winning with more than 55% of the vote, Proposition 20 launched California's commitment to protecting the coast through comprehensive planning and regulation of coastal development. The proposition put in place an interim four-year program to regulate development and directed the newly-created Commission to draft a long-range plan to guide future conservation and development in the coastal zone, using maximum public input. In late 1975, following hundreds of public meetings, the California Coastal Plan was submitted to the legislature and became the foundation for the California Coastal Act of 1976.

The Coastal Act affirmed California's commitment to providing public access to the coast for all Californians, and to protecting and conserving coastal resources, including wetlands, sensitive plants, animals and habitats, agriculture, and scenic rural landscapes. It also directed that new development stay within existing developed areas but provided a clear priority for coastal related development, such as commercial fishing and boating and visitor-serving facilities.

To accomplish these goals, the Act established a unique partnership between the state and local governments that gave local government the authority to regulate new coastal development under Local Coastal Programs approved by the Coastal Commission.

Over the 40 years since it was created, the Coastal Commission and local government have been instrumental in preserving thousands of acres of coastal habitat and rural agricultural land, protecting and creating public accessways and trails to and along the shoreline, and improving

the overall quality of the built environment. “After 40 years the jury is in: we can have a strong coastal protection program and a strong coastal economy. People come from near and far to experience and recreate on our coast because of our on-going commitment to protecting it.” said Coastal Commission Executive Director Charles Lester. “The fact of the matter is that the Coastal Commission and local governments approve most development applications they consider, but the program ensures that any new development is consistent with the Coastal Act, and that is what makes all the difference. The Coastal Commission has a 40-year track record of approving development that provides public access, preserves scenic views, and restores or enhances natural habitat.”

Over the last four decades, the Coastal Act has been critical to preventing or redesigning the development of large-scale projects that would have damaged coastal resources, such as a toll road through a state park in Orange County, industrial oil and Liquefied Natural Gas facilities offshore, and a destination golf resort on the Hearst Ranch. And through continued public participation and strong local planning efforts with local governments, the Coastal Act has protected the scenic and environmental quality of places like the Big Sur coast from the cumulative impacts of poorly located or designed residential development. Many miles of public trails, such as the Monterey coastal recreational trail, exist because of the Coastal program, and the Coastal Commission is working actively with other stakeholders to create the continuous California Coastal Trail the length of the state.

“The coast of California would be unrecognizable today if it hadn't been for Prop 20,” said Coastal Commission Chair Mary Shallenberger. “Forty years later, coastal protection has become part of the fabric of California’s environmental legacy.”

For a press kit or more information on California’s coastal protection program, please visit our website at www.coastal.ca.gov.

